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ABSTRACT

This document explains the curriculum development process used by the Workforce 2000 Partnership, a network of industries and educational institutions that provide training in communication, computation, and creative thinking to employees in the textile, apparel, and carpet industries in 15 plants in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. First, a rationale is presented for beginning the curriculum development process by conducting a needs assessment. Next, the partnership's models/procedures for defining the elements of an effective workplace curriculum and sequencing learning activities are described briefly. Finally, the importance of including learners in evaluation is emphasized. Attached to the document are the following: sample lesson plan for a learning module in understanding an employee handbook; transparency master of the general theory of instructional sequence for adult learning that the partnership uses as a basis for its curriculum development process; sample individual education plan form; bibliography of five resources pertaining to developing curricula for adult learners; and information sheet listing the members and objectives of the Workforce 2000 Partnership and the areas it serves. (MN)

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WRITING CURRICULUM FOR THE WORKPLACE

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A Report Prepared by the Project Staff of the
Workforce 2000 Partnership

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The Workforce 2000 Partnership is a network of industries and educational institutions that provides training in communication, computation, and creative thinking to employees in the textile, apparel, and carpet industries. The Partnership serves line employees and first-line supervisors at 15 plants in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. The curricula for these topics is developed by the educational partners which include a junior college, a technical college, and two adult education/literacy programs.

Since the Partnership uses functional context curricula to teach the topics listed above, project staff have received extensive training in writing curriculum for the workplace. This report will highlight portions of that training and describe how to assess the needs of the workplace, the elements of an effective workplace literacy curriculum, and how to include learners in evaluating the outcomes of the learning activities.

Assessing the Needs of the Workplace

Before writing curriculum instructors must know what employees need to learn. An instructional need is defined as the difference between what workers know and what the job requires. Project staff employ a variety of methods to analyze the duties and tasks of the jobs, as well as what kinds of communication, computation, and creative thinking skills are required. The analyses include interviewing exemplary workers; observing these workers on the job; interviewing groups of workers who perform the same or very similar jobs; reviewing documents such as job descriptions, handbooks, signs, memoranda, etc; interviewing supervisors and managers; and structuring surveys to be completed by workers, supervisors, and managers. Also during the analyses the curriculum developer will look for skills that the worker must perform to be considered for promotions.

Needs assessment is a vital part of the curriculum development process because the educator must fully understand what a worker does in order to determine what the worker must learn. As the needs assessment process continues, the educator also collects numerous documents to use as materials for instruction. The use of work-specific materials for instruction is what sets workplace education apart from other types of adult education. These materials allow skills to be

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learned in the classroom and more readily transferred to the plant floor. Therefore, reading skills improvement takes place as the worker is reading and comprehending the employee handbook; math skills improvement happens while the worker is computing percentages for production; and thinking skills improve as the worker is learning to work as a team member.

Defining The Elements of Effective Workplace Curriculum

Frankly, the elements necessary for any effective curriculum are equally as important in designing workplace curriculum. The following components are included in our model: (Figure 1)

General Instructional Objective
Specific Instructional Objective
Learning Activities (with a suggested time frame)
A Description of the Resources and Materials Required for the Activities to be Taught
A Description of the Evaluation Process

It is important to note that, although the evaluation process is listed last, the specific instructional objectives should be written to indicate the assessment of the objective. An example of such an objective would be, "use notetaking skills when reading instructional training materials." As will be discussed later, evaluation must be built into every element of the curriculum.

Since the workers in the industries will be adults, instructors are cautioned to keep in mind the characteristics of adult learners. Workers require that the curriculum provide the simplest, quickest route to learning. This requirement leads to certain implications for curriculum design:

The presentation of new information should be meaningful and should include aids that help the learner organize the information and relate it to previously stored information.

New information should be presented at a pace that permits mastery.

Presentation of one idea at a time and minimization of competing intellectual demands should aid comprehension.

Frequent summarization should facilitate retention and recall.

Sequencing Learning Activities

Project staff use a model of instructional sequencing adapted from *Literacy at Work* by Jori Phillipi (Figure 2). In this model, the instructional sequence begins with an activity designed

to invite the learners into the learning process. This activity will allow the learners to bring to mind past learning and experiences in a way that will facilitate the learning of new information. The activity may come from the workplace or from other real-life situations.

Once the new information has been presented, learners participate in activities designed to practice skills clustered in increasingly larger chunks. These skills are then applied to situations from the workplace to maximize the transfer of the skills learned. A closure activity provides for review and assessment of the skills learned and may also identify needs for further learning.

Including Learners in Evaluation

Every activity contains opportunities for evaluation, and, as much as possible, the learners perform the evaluation themselves. As curriculum is written, a page is developed for the learners to use to follow the sequence of activities and to document their performance. (Figure 3)

Frequently, pre- and post-tests (referred to as Previews and Reviews) are administered as a part of the evaluation process. Learners participate in scoring these tests and write their scores on their pages. To vary the assessment methods, the learners may be asked to rate themselves on their ability to perform certain skills, to write a phrase or statement that expresses their belief about their learning, or to specify what skills need more practice.

The purpose for including the learners in the evaluation process is to help them understand that assessment is reflective, constructive, and self-regulated. The learners, having participated in an ongoing needs assessment process, understand why they are participating in the learning activities. Therefore, including them in the evaluation of the learning gives them opportunities for relearning, synthesizing, and applying the skills.

Written self-evaluative comments on the learner's page also provide opportunities for communication between the learner and the instructor. This type of assessment is teacher-mediated (*i.e.* usually done when instructed by the teacher), ongoing, and cumulative. The learner's page is filed in his or her folder which is regularly reviewed by the instructor. During the reviews, the instructor may write comments in response to those made by the learner.

Writing curriculum for the workplace requires a thorough understanding of the workplace, the elements of effective curriculum, the characteristics of adult learners, and the process of evaluating outcomes. The goal of the curriculum is to enable learners to transfer classroom academic learning to the plant floor thereby improving productivity and efficiency.

Module: Understanding the Employee Handbook
Job Title: New Hires
11/15/95

Author: Ann Bennett
Date Submitted: Rev.

Date Approved: 12/15/95

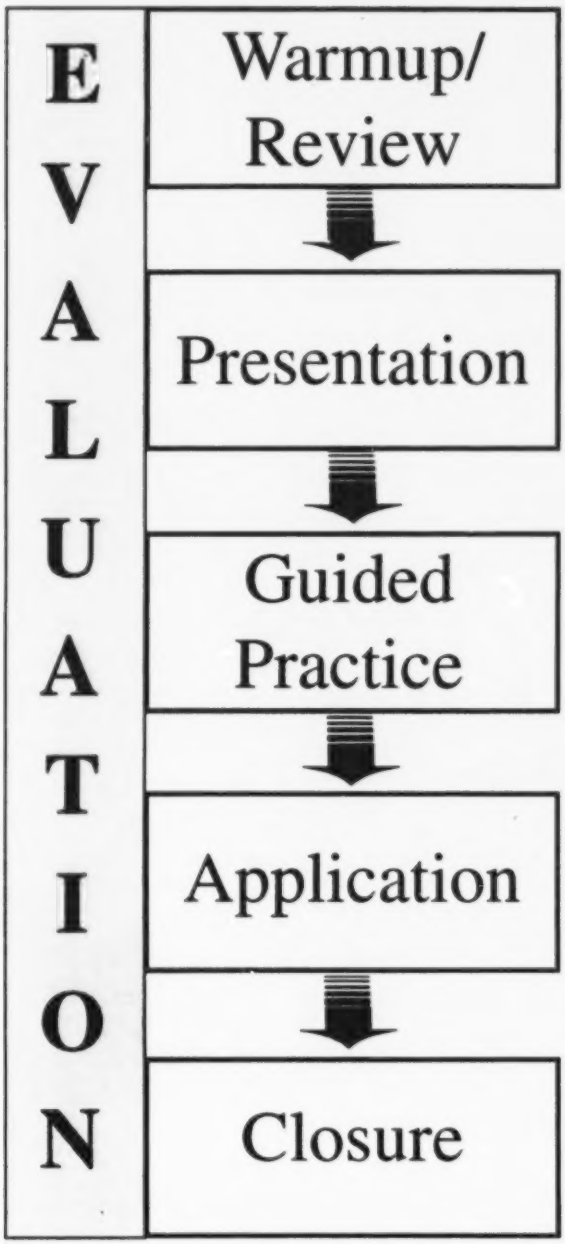
General Instructional Objective: Read and interpret written vocational materials

Overall Time: 1 hr.

Specific Instructional Objective	Time	Learning Activities	Resources/Materials	Evaluation
Read and interpret specific information from written workplace materials such as contracts, handbooks, personnel policies, business correspondence, and manuals.	5 min.	Preview 1.1 Motivational Activity 1. Demonstration of the effectiveness of using the Table of Contents. 2. Discuss the Table of Contents located in the employee handbook. 3. Have students locate information in the handbook.	Preview Standard Textile Catalog Employee Handbook	Completion of Preview Observation of students' ability to locate information in the Table of Contents
	5 min.	1.2 Instructional Activity Discuss organization of written materials.		Student responses to verbal questions
	5 min.	1.3 Instructional Activity Discuss and practice reading strategies.		
	5 min.	1.4 Instructional Activity Instructor models reading strategies.	Employee Handbook	Student responses to verbal questions
	10 min.	1.5 Instructional Activity Students practice using reading strategies.	Employee Handbook	Completed skills worksheet
	15 min.	1.6 Instructional Activity Play Handbook Jeopardy	Game Board Game Cards/Questions	Student's ability to scan handbook for answers
	10 min.	1.7 Closure Activity 1. Review reading strategies. 2. Administer review.	Review	Results of Review

Figure 1

A GENERAL THEORY OF INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE FOR ADULT LEARNING



- Opens lesson
- Provides focus for learners
- Connects to past learning
- Connects to past experience

- Presents new knowledge
- Uses various strategies and methods to allow for different learning styles

- Activities structured by educator
- Practices basic skills or parts of complex skills
- Clusters skills into increasingly larger chunks

- Application task approximates real-life performance demands
- Maximizes possibility of life transfer of skills learned

- Reviews major points covered and relates back to objective
- Assesses learner ability after instruction
- Identifies needs for further learning

Modified from:
Phillipi, Jori. *Literacy at Work: The Workbook for Program Directors.* New York: Simon & Schuster Workplace Resources, 1991.

Figure 2

WORKFORCE 2000 PARTNERSHIP
Understanding the Employee Handbook
Individual Education Plan

Name : _____

Date of Course: _____ **Employer:** _____

GOAL	X	INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES	LEARNING ACTIVITIES	PREVIEW/REVIEW SCORE		EVALUATION COMMENTS
1. Improve skills for current job	X	Read and interpret specific information from written workplace materials such as handbooks, policies, business correspondence, and manuals.	Preview	_____	X	
2. Improve skills for changing technology/future	X		Table of Contents Activity			
3. Improve reading/ writing/ math	X		Discussion - Organization of Written Materials			
4. Improve problem solving/critical thinking			Discussion - Reading Strategies			
5. Improve speaking/listening			Guided Practice - Modeling Reading Strategies			
6. Improve English (for nonnative speaker)			Applied Practice - Reading Strategies Worksheet			
7. GED			Applied Practice - Handbook Jeopardy			
8. Other (Specify)			Review	X	_____	

_____ _____
Employee Signature **Date** **Instructor Signature**

Figure 3

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Related Resources

Millar, Robin. "Making the Past Meaningful." *Adult Learning* (January-February 1995), pgs. 6-7.

Phillipi, Jori. *Literacy at Work: the Workbook for Program Directors*. New York: Simon & Schuster Workplace Resources, 1991.

Phillipi, Jori. *Retraining the Workforce: Meeting the Global Challenge*. Dallas, TX: R. Jan LeCroy Center for Educational Telecommunications, Dallas County Community College District, 1993.

Reif, Margaret. "Alternative Assessment for Adult Learners." *Adult Learning* (January-February 1995), pgs. 12-14.

Zemke, Ron and Zemke, Susan. "Thirty Things We Know for Sure About Adult Learning." *Training* (July 1988), pgs. 57-61.

2000 Workforce Partnership

The Workforce 2000 Partnership combines the resources of educational and industrial partners to provide education and training in communication, computation, and creative thinking skills to employees in the apparel, carpet, and textile industries.

The project is funded by a US Department of Education National Workplace Literacy Program grant awarded over three years to Enterprise State Junior College in the amount of $2,243,470 (70%) with committed private sector matching funds of $961,487 (30%), bringing the total program resources to $3,204,957.

The activities of the Partnership do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Participation by the education or industrial partners in the project should also not be construed as endorsement by the Government of any of the partners' products.

EDUCATION PARTNERS

Enterprise State Junior College

MacArthur State Technical College

Southeast Alabama Adult Education Network

Laurens County Literacy Council

INDUSTRIAL PARTNERS

CMI Industries, Inc.

Opp & Micolas Mills

Pridecraft Enterprises

Shaw Industries

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